

religious liberties we all cherish. You stood with us in 1993 when I was proud to sign the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. I was disappointed that the Supreme Court struck down parts of the act in June but pleased that its provisions still apply to Federal agencies, entities, and institutions. You stood with us in '95 with Secretary Riley when we issued the guidelines reaffirming that our young people did not have to leave their religious beliefs at the schoolhouse door. And we clarified the limits of religious expression permitted in our schools. I still say what I said then: No one can seriously question that it strengthens our young people to be able to pursue their own religious convictions and thereby gain values and strength, hope and reassurance that come with faith.

Today you stand with us again as we issue these guidelines to clarify and reinforce the right of religious expression in the Federal workplace. These guidelines will ensure that Federal employees and employers will respect the rights of those who engage in religious speech as well as those who do not. They do three things. First, they clarify that Federal employees may engage in personal religious expression to the greatest extent possible, consistent with workplace efficiency and the requirements of law. Second, they clarify that Federal employers may not discriminate in employment on the basis of religion. Third and finally, they clarify that an agency must reasonably accommodate employees' religious practices.

Today I'm instructing the Office of Personnel Management to distribute these guidelines to all civilian branch agencies and officials. And we expect all employees to follow them carefully. What we accomplish here together today shows what can be done to protect religious freedom within the bounds of our Constitution, when people of good will and faith come together.

My own faith, rooted in the assurance of things hoped for and the convictions of things unseen, calls those of us who share it to a lifelong effort not only to deepen the understanding of the soul but to bring our actions, thoughts, and feelings into harmony with God's will. On that journey, as I have said many times in the past, I have been immeasurably enriched by the power of the Torah,

the beauty of the Koran, the piercing insights of the religions of East and South Asia and of our own Native Americans, the joyful energy that I have felt in black and Pentecostal churches, and yes, even the probing questions of the skeptics. That is America at its best.

My great hope is that we can enter this new century and this new millennium as the most successful multiracial, multiethnic, multireligious democracy the world has ever known. We will get there through efforts like this, men, women from all walks of life coming together to respect and celebrate our differences while uniting around the ideals that bind us together, more importantly, as one America.

Religious freedom is at the heart of what it means to be an American and at the heart of our journey to become truly one America. Let us pledge always to honor it and, today, to make these guidelines the source of harmony and strength as we guarantee to all of our people our precious liberty.

Thank you. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:40 a.m. in Room 450 in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Steven T. McFarland, director, Center for Law and Religious Freedom, Christian Legal Society; Marc Stern, legal counsel, American Jewish Congress; Eliot Minberg, general counsel and legal director, People for the American Way; Buzz Thomas, special counsel, National Council of Churches; and David Saperstein, director, Religious Action Center and Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Memorandum on Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace

August 14, 1997

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace

Religious freedom is central to the American system of liberty. Our Nation's founders erected the twin pillars of this freedom, guaranteeing the free exercise of religion and prohibiting the establishment of religion by the state, in the very First Amendment to the

Constitution. Throughout our history, men and women have come to this Nation to escape religious persecution and secure this precious freedom. They and others have built a Nation in which religious practices and religious institutions have thrived—exactly because each individual has been able to choose for himself or herself whether and, if so, how to worship.

In the four and one-half years I have served as President, I have been proud of the efforts of my Administration, in tandem with a broad coalition of individuals and organizations, to support freedom of religion. In 1993, I was proud to reaffirm the rightful and historic place of religion throughout our society when I signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which continues to protect the exercise of religion from being inappropriately burdened by Federal agencies, entities, and institutions. In 1995, I was similarly proud to support the protection of appropriate religious expression in the public schools when I directed the Secretary of Education to issue guidance to public school districts on the extent of permissible prayer and other speech of a religious character.

Today, I focus on the Federal workplace, directing the heads of executive departments and agencies (“agencies”) to comply with the *Guidelines on Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace* to be distributed today by the Office of Personnel Management. All civilian executive branch agencies, officials, and employees must follow these Guidelines carefully. Strict adherence to these Guidelines will ensure that agencies will respect the rights of those who engage in religious practices or espouse religious beliefs, as well as those who reject religion altogether. In particular, the Guidelines establish the following principles:

First, agencies shall permit employees to engage in personal religious expression (as they must permit other constitutionally valued expression) to the greatest extent possible, consistent with interests in workplace efficiency and requirements of law. Of course, the workplace is for work, and an agency may restrict any speech that truly interferes with its ability to perform public services. In addition, an agency may have a legal obligation to restrict certain forms of

speech that intrude unduly on the legitimate rights of others. But when an agency allows nonreligious speech, because that speech does not impinge on these interests, an agency also usually must allow otherwise similar speech of a religious nature. The one exception to this principle of neutrality—an exception mandated by the Establishment Clause—is when religious speech would lead a reasonable observer to conclude that the Government is endorsing religion. Subject to this exception, an agency may not typically subject religious speech to greater restrictions than other speech entitled to full constitutional protection, and therefore should allow much of this speech to go forward.

Second, the Federal Government may not discriminate in employment on the basis of religion. This means that an agency may not hire or refuse to hire, promote or refuse to promote, or otherwise favor or disfavor a potential, current, or former employee because of his or her religion or religious beliefs. This means that an agency, or any supervisor within an agency, may not coerce an employee to participate in religious activities (or to refrain from participating in otherwise permissible religious activities) by offering better (or threatening worse) employment conditions. And this means that an agency shall prevent any supervisor or any employee from engaging in religious harassment or creating, through the use of intimidation or pervasive or severe ridicule or insult, a religiously hostile environment.

Third, agencies must reasonably accommodate employees’ religious practices. The need for accommodation arises in many circumstances—for example, when work schedules interfere with Sabbath or other religious holiday observances or when work rules prevent an employee from wearing religiously compelled dress. Once again, governmental interests in workplace efficiency may be at stake in such cases. But an agency, as specified in greater detail in the Guidelines, must always accommodate an employee’s religious practice in the absence of nonspeculative costs and may need to accommodate such practice even when doing so will impose some hardship on the agency’s operations.

All of these principles are related. All are but variants or applications of a single rule

of neutrality and fairness—that agencies shall treat employees with the same respect and consideration, regardless of their religious beliefs. Whether by allowing religious speech, preventing religious coercion or harassment, or making accommodations to religious practice, the Federal Government must act to ensure that the Federal workplace is generous to followers of all religions, as well as to followers of none. The Guidelines will advance this goal. Although they doubtless will leave unresolved many difficult questions arising from specific factual contexts and circumstances, they will clarify the obligations and appropriate commitments of the Federal Government, acting as an employer, to protect and enhance religious freedoms.

William J. Clinton

Statement on Child Safety Locks for Handguns

August 14, 1997

This week, Smith and Wesson, the world's largest manufacturer of handguns, announced that it is forging a partnership with the Master Lock Co. to provide a child safety lock with every handgun sold for commercial use. I applaud both of these companies for their efforts to promote gun safety.

I particularly want to commend Smith and Wesson for taking an important and responsible step for children's safety. Child safety locks are the right thing to do. In 1994, 185 children were killed by accidental gunshot wounds. That is why my anti-gang and youth violence legislation would require that all federally licensed gun dealers provide such safety devices with every handgun sold. And that is why on March 3d I ordered all Federal agencies to provide child safety locks with the thousands of handguns they issue to Federal law enforcement officers.

Child safety locks have garnered the wide support of law enforcement, the medical community, many local governments, and now a part of the firearms manufacturing industry. This fall the full Senate considers the anti-juvenile crime legislation. I hope they will include the child safety lock as part of the legislation.

Remarks at the National Archives and Records Administration Announcing the White House Millennium Program

August 15, 1997

Thank you very much. Governor Carlin, thank you for hosting us here in this wonderful place, in the shadow of our most important historical documents. I thank the British and Australian Ambassadors for joining us, along with representatives of the embassies of Brazil, France, Iceland, and Germany. I'm glad we have so many people from our Cabinet here today, Secretaries Shalala, Riley, Slater; General McCaffrey; Dr. Varmus from the NIH; Joe Duffey, Director of the USIA; Senator Harris Wofford, the head of our national service efforts; Dr. John Brademas; Robert Stanton; and others who are here.

We have a number of citizens who've come from—some from quite a distance—the mayor of Beverly Hills, California, MeraLee Goldman is here. Mr. Pete Homer, the vice president of the National Indian Business Association; Mr. Leland Swenson, the president of the National Farmers Union, is here. And I want to make particular note of the Director of our initiative on race, Judy Winston, because that's going to be a very important part of what will happen as we prepare for the millennium.

As the First Lady said, this gives us a remarkable opportunity to honor the past and to imagine the future, and to connect the two in our own minds and for our fellow Americans. The 20th century has been called the American century. Through wars and depression and industrial revolution and now an information revolution, our American spirit of discovery, innovation, and faith in the future have carried us forward and inspired billions of people around the world.

Now we have come to a milestone, nearing the end of an exhilarating decade that has seen the fall of communism and the rise of democracy around the world; the mapping of the mysteries of the human body and the exploration of the terrain of Mars; the creation of new American ideas and art. Now we have begun the most important exploration of all, I believe: rediscovering and reaffirming our common identity as a people